



## Zika Will Be a Bigger Problem than EBOLA

Insights

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Based on the U.S. success in containing Ebola last year, we have reason to believe that should this terrifying disease reappear, the U.S. will minimize its domestic effects. Moreover research may even come up with better treatments or vaccines. Thus, I do not blame President Obama for recently shifting money from Ebola prevention and response to Zika. Ideally, if government were not so bloated, inefficient and driven by entitlement spending, there would be money for both, but we live in a flawed political world.

In its recent [situation report](#) on the virus, the World Health Organization concluded that, *"It is now clear that the virus causes microcephaly,"* which is a condition that causes babies to be born with abnormally small heads and underdeveloped brains. Zika has the potential to affect more American citizens than Ebola and thus far, there is no vaccine or a surefire way to prevent the industrious *Aedes aegypti* mosquitos heading our way.

On the positive side, many national health experts do not expect some sort of epidemic, but do expect *"local clusters of the disease."* According to AP,

WASHINGTON (AP) - A top public health official says there's been no local transmission of the Zika (ZEE'-kuh) virus in the United States, so any talk about women in the country delaying pregnancy "is not even an issue for discussion at this point."

Dr. Anthony Fauci (FOW'-chee) of the National Institutes of Health also says it's "very likely" the U.S. could see "local transmitted cases as we get into the robust mosquito season" this summer.

He says if there's a "local outbreak," it's up to health officials to work to contain it.

For now, he says, women in the U.S. who are getting pregnant "should not be worried about anything regarding pregnancy" - but steer clear of countries where there are outbreaks.

The best estimate of the extent of spread in North America is [this NPR piece](#).

But truth is that we do not have that many answers, including the extent of the risk of sexual transmission or even when or how much we'll see transmission in the U.S.

Let's not overreact, but employers would be wise to take the following practical and inexpensive steps:

1. Recognize that the number of people affected is still relatively small but the effects are terrible.
2. Start tracking developments NOW before a crisis occurs, which would be different than our usual responses to Pandemics and threatening diseases.
3. Evaluate your workplaces for exposure to mosquitos, develop responses and begin training.
4. Mosquito repellent, certain types of clothes and long sleeves may become PPE. Despite detesting mosquitos, many Americans are haphazard about their use of mosquito repellent and changing their attire.
5. When I have travelled in parts of Africa where malaria is common, I have religiously taken measures to avoid mosquito bites. There will come a time when we will have to create that same sense of urgency in American workers about mosquitos. And let's not forget the delightful West Nile Virus, which has already bedeviled certain states and has already received a fair amount of OSHA attention.
6. Check these [OSHA West Nile Guidelines](#) going back to 2012. Here' a sample of simple OSHA recommendations from its west Nile Quick Card:

### **Preventing Mosquito Exposure**

- Reduce or eliminate mosquito breeding grounds (i.e., sources of stagnant or standing water).
  - Cover as much skin as possible by wearing long-sleeved shirts, long pants and socks when possible.
  - Avoid use of perfumes and colognes when working outdoors.
  - Use an insect repellent containing DEET or Picaridin on skin that is not covered by clothing.
  - Choose a repellent that provides protection for the amount of time that you will be exposed. The more DEET or Picaridin a repellent contains, the longer time it can protect you.
  - Spray insect repellent on the outside of your clothing (mosquitoes can bite through thin clothing).
  - Do NOT spray insect repellent on skin that is under clothing.
  - Do NOT spray aerosol or pump products in enclosed areas or directly on your face. Do not allow insect repellent to contact your eyes or mouth. Do not use repellents on cuts, wounds or irritated skin.
  - After working, use soap and water to wash skin and clothing that has been treated with insect repellent.
  - Be extra vigilant from dusk to dawn when mosquitoes are most active.
1. Educate employees, including those employees traveling overseas.

## **Additional Relevant Information**

“Effect of El Niño is for a hotter & wetter South East The makings of a Zika perfect storm in the Northern hemisphere.” Dr. Neil Bodie

<http://www.politico.com/story/2016/04/white-house-rips-congress-over-zika-funding-221646>

New survey on American attitudes toward Zika virus finds limited awareness or concern

<http://sciencemag.com/?p=1463041>

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